

Andrew Jackson to James Gadsden, August 1, 1819, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JAMES GADSDEN.

Hermitage, August 1, 1819.

D'r Gadsden: On last evening I recd. your letter of the 6th of July in answer to mine by Major Armstrong, I have wrote you often since that time, I might say, every week that I was able to write. I adressed several via Neworleans, and some direct to mobile. . . .

I knew you would be astonished at that part of my letter that related to Genl Swift¹ — that you may form your own ideas from facts I enclose you a confidential statement of them substantially as the[y] took place. I was aware that it would astonish you, I knew how much confidence you had in the Genl, I had you know the same exalted opinion of him, and when I wrote you on this subject it was to bring to your view, the weakness of human nature, the depravity of man that you might be allways on your guard. let me assure you, I applaud you for your principle, it is the only correct one to be persued, never abandon a good opinion you have formed of any man unless on the most stubborn proof—but Sir in the mean time it is prudent, to view facts, and consider of them well. If the Genl as he says was your informant, he had read the letter, declared the statement true. His attempt to give it a differrent coulouring at the time he did, endeavouring to change it to a mere letter of introduction when he knew and had said differrently, is positive proof of his want of stability, firmness, and integrity. I have no objections when you meet with Genl Swift that you shew him the enclosed confidential statement for his own use and his own eye. I trust he will have the candeur to acknowledge the statement I have made to be substantially correct.

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1 Joseph G. Swift, chief of engineers.

I see from your letter that business will compell you on to the city² this fall that you wish to be on before congress meets although I am very anxious to go on to congress unless I can sell some of my out lands, so as to aid me in funds to meet the payment for my farm, lotts etc etc, in and near Florence, and to aid my pay and emolument for travelling expences, I cannot, proceed. I sett out in a few days to sell my farm near florence if I can, if I should I will decend the Mississippi and pass round by water and Touch at Mobile Point for you But my Dear young friend, I cannot under uncertainties request you to pospone your Journey to the city. I would advise you to proceed when your business calls, advising me when you will be at the city to which place I will write you my ultimate determination. Being determined to leave the army the moment

2 Washington.

the business in the Senate is acted on, I do not wish to create debts, that I am unable to meet. Mrs. J. Joins me in good wishes, I am your friend sincerely

Confidential. 3 I thought it a duty I owed to mr munroe to put him on his guard as it respected Crawford. I wrote him that I was informed confidentially, that mr Wm. H Crawford had written a letter to mr Clay the object of which was to form a combination and opposition against mr Munroes reelection that I could Vouch for the veracity of my confidential informant, but from whom my informant obtained his information I knew not, (you recollect you gave me no name) all that my informant stated to me was, that his informant was of high charector, and standing in the united states. When I reached Washington this thing was spoken of in confidential circles.

3 This paper is probably the confidential statement referred to in Jackson to James Gadsden, Aug. 1, 1819. It has become separated from the letter and is filed in the Jackson MSS., vol. 116, p. 106.

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on my arrival at the city amongst the number of my friends Genl Swift waited upon me with his usual friendship and Frankness, I was happy to see him, for as you know I had the most exalted opinion of him. a few evenings after Genl Swift called to see me again and spent the evening, in the course of the evening he asked to have some private conversation with me I shewed him to my bed room—as soon as we were alone, he introduced the subject of mr Wm. H Crawford's letter to Clay, and observed that he felt much interested in knowing who was my informant, and if I would disclose it to him in the strictest confidence I would lay him under obligations. Knowing the confidence you had in Gen Swift, having equal confidence in him myself, and finding from his declarations that he was materially interested to know, under the strictest confidence I gave him you as my informant—the Genl smiled and observed (here I will give you his words) “he has not treated me generously, but it is true I am the man I saw the letter and read it.” I instantly replied, Sir you are not to charge my informant with ungenerous treatment, let it be remembered that I have informed you and now repeat it that my informant gave me no name from whom he derived his information, but told me it was from a gentleman of high standing and respectability and if any person is to blame for speaking of it, it is me. The Genl then repeated it is me, I saw and read the letter but as mr Crawford and himself had been at war, but had buried the Hatchett, he hoped it would not be stirred unless some grand political purpose could be effected by it. I told him I had named to mr Munroe that mr Crawford had written such a letter, I had stated it to some others, but as he had requested it, I should not bring it before the public unless I thought I could effect some public good by it. here for the present the conversation ended, and the Genl left me, a day or two after I waited on the President, during my visit, the subject of the letter to Clay was introduced, mr. Munroe told me, that he had a conversation with mr Crawford on that subject and that he had denied positively ever writing such a letter and also mr Crawford said that he situated as he was, holding an office under mr munroe must be a Villain if he would attempt to intrigue and to form a combination to defeat his election. I looked sternly at mr munroe and replied, say to mr Wm H Crawford from me that he is a Villain, and that he dare not put his pen to paper and sign his name to the declaration that

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he never wrote such a letter to mr Clay, if he does say to him from me, if I do not prove it upon him, I will apologise to him in every gazzett in the u states: he replied, you rest upon Genl Swift to prove this, be careful least when it comes to the test, he does not deceive you, that he does not trip. I replied on my informants veracity I was ready to risk my life, who was his I did not know he told me he was a man of high standing and respectability, whether it was Genl Swift or not I did not know, but tripping was out of the question with me, no man should do it, and I would thank him to say from me to mr Crawford that he was the very Villain he had described himself to be, that I had such confidence in my informant that I repeated, that mr. C. durst not put his pen to paper and deny the charge and sign it, if he did I pledged my self to prove the fact upon him, and if I failed, I pledged myself to apologise to him in every gazzett in the u state—from the President, I went to the Sec of War, there being alone, the conversation turned on the subject, mr Calhoun stated that mr Crawford denied writing such a letter. I replied to him in the same way I had to Mr Munroe, requesting the Sec of War to give mr Crawford the information of my declarations.

The night following Genl Swift waited upon me and asked to have some private conversation, I shewed him into my bed chamber—as soon as alone, he introduced the subject of the letter and said he had waited upon me to have some conversation, fearing that I had not fully comprehended him. I replied I could not mistake him, that I understood him to say that he was your informant, that it was true, that he had seen and read the letter—the Genl replied that was true, but I had not taken up a proper idea of the tenor of that letter, that it was merely a letter of introduction from mr Crawford in favour of a Gentleman from North Carolina to mr Clay and there was nothing else contained in it. I felt roused, and observed sir it is strange that a mere letter of introduction could inspire you with ideas of combinations at the next Presidential election, and if you are the informant of my confidential friend explain to me sir for the expressions then used in the letter as you now say was a mere letter of introduction, my friend said to me that his informant observed to him, that this letter from mr. C. to Clay was the first evidence to him, that mr Wm H Crawford was one of the greatest Villains and rascals that ever

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disgraced human nature, that holding an office under mr munroe and intriguing against him was the highest evidence of his corruption and baseness. Genl Swift paused for at least a minute without reply, and when he broke silence asked me if there was no way to bring about a reconciliation between mr Crawford and myself. I told him there was none, that I knew him to be a Villain, that I had made it a rule through life never to take a rascal by the hand knowing him to such, that I never gave my hand where my heart could not go also, believing as I did of mr Crawford I never would take him by the hand, that I did not know who was the informant of my confidential friend, but if mr Crawford would deny the fact of writing the letter the object of which was to form a combination against mr. M. election and that if I did not prove it upon him I would apologise to him in every gazzett. We parted and here this thing has rested, ever since. Shortly after this the Vote was taken in the house of representatives on the Seminole question. I had recd. many pressing invitations to Vissit Baltimore Philadelphia, Newyork and Boston, intending to go as far as west point if I found the Vote of the house of representatives put an end to a further investigation in the Senate, I sent for a member of the committee in the Senate who informed me that the committee in the senate would not stir the thing as he believed any further. I prepared to proceed to the Eastward. When I returned to Baltimore on the sunday evening before the rise of congress I met the report of the senate, I was engaged to dine with the citizens on monday: at 8 oclock in the evening, I took the stage for the city and reached there the next morning half after three, where I was informed that the report of the committee was written by mr Crawford, which I verily believe, and that after I had left the city for the Eastward Genl Swift and mr Crawford had been very intimate often together, and on the most friendly footing. When I left the City Genl S was to have overtaken us in a few days. I am of the opinion that all my conversation was detailed to mr Crawford, and finding I would not be friends with him, he drew the report and urged his tools to report it to the senate. The information of their intimacy and being frequently together is from undoubted authority. but this intimacy alone would have created no unfavourable opinion of the Genl, but his avowal of being your author, having read the letter and declaring it was true, and then attempting to say it was a mere letter of introduction, combined with

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the intimacy afterwards and Crawford drawing the report, during this intimacy induced me as well as a number of my friends to form unfavourable opinion of him, knowing your unlimited confidence in him, as a man of honor and probity, I named the circumstances, that you, at least, might be on your guard. It is also stated that on another occasion he has tripped. yours friend sincerely